

West Virginia



A Comprehensive Approach to Reducing Youth Tobacco Use Rates

Public Health Problem

West Virginia has long held the unenviable position of consistently ranking among the top five states in the country for youth smoking. As recently as 1999, the cigarette smoking prevalence for youth in this state was 42.2 percent.

Taking Action

West Virginia's Tobacco Prevention Program has implemented a comprehensive approach to reduce youth tobacco use. The youth prevention program includes the implementation of a targeted mass media campaign; involvement of youth in RAZE (their statewide, teen-led, teen-implemented anti-tobacco movement); implementation of CDC's School Health Guidelines; enforcement of tobacco-free school grounds policies; passage of excise tax increase from 38 cents to 55 cents; and offering youth the opportunity to participate in the cessation program, N.O.T. on Tobacco. West Virginia has strengthened its partnerships with the state Department of Education, the Prevention Research Center at the University of West Virginia, and the American Lung Association.

Implications and Impact

Cigarette smoking prevalence among high school students in West Virginia decreased from 42.2 percent in 1999 to 28.5 percent in 2003, which represented a statistically significant relative decline of 32.5 percent. This decline translates into 37,779 fewer youth who smoked than in 1999, and it is estimated that this decline will save an estimated \$680 million in lifetime health care costs.

Contact Information

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